United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Special Rapporteur on Human Rights recommends dispatch of 20 experts to monitor refugee routes and population centres in Rwanda; envisages long-term deployment of up to 200 experts.

+ UNAMIR says situation in former Rwanda protected zone is beginning to stabilize; Goma-style disaster has been averted.

+ Secretary-General asks Special Envoy Piriz-Ballón to review situation in Tajikistan with representatives of Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

+ UNPROFOR says it is caring for more than 10,000 refugees from Bihac pocket in United Nations Protected Area in Croatia.

+ UNOSOM II says it has not yet established who ambushed convoy at Burleego yesterday; notes that attackers taken prisoner were members of General Aidid's sub-clan, and that incident took place in SNA-controlled territory.

+ As Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination tries to streamline agenda, non-governmental organizations object to proposals to limit participation in debate on human rights violations.

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The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, René Degni-Ségui, has recommended that the United Nations urgently deploy 20 experts in Rwanda to monitor refugee movements along "humanitarian routes" and 10 major population centres. He said between 150 and 200 experts should be deployed as soon as possible for at least six months to monitor the return of refugees and the reconstruction of the country, as well as to inquire into major human rights violations. The experts would be gradually withdrawn at the end of the period of national reconstruction, leaving 50 to conclude the inquiry.

(more)

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Those recommendations were contained in a plan of action put forward by the Special Rapporteur in a report to the Economic and Social Council dated 12 August. He said that the fundamental problem in Rwanda was that of security, and that it had not been solved by the ending of the armed conflict. Abandoned houses had been illegally occupied, banditry and robbery were rampant, and State administration was virtually non-existent. Human rights experts could help restore confidence, prevent massacres, and deter reprisals by the new authorities. He stressed that international assistance was vital to reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in Rwanda, and appealed for voluntary contributions to support the early deployment of the experts.

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The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) today reported that the situation in the former southwestern protected zone was beginning to stabilize. Meanwhile, aid workers were experiencing "a creeping sense of security," according to a spokesman for the Organization.

The United Nations Rwanda Emergency Office estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 people had crossed into Zaire in the last week, while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) put the total refugee population in the greater Bukavu area at about 350,000. "It seems now that a Goma-style disaster has been successfully averted," the spokesman said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has reviewed the serious deterioration of the situation in Tajikistan and at the Tajik/Afghan border in the last few days with Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballón, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General instructed Mr. Piriz-Ballón and his senior colleagues dealing with Tajikistan to meet this afternoon with the representatives of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan to review the situation and to consider possible initiatives by the Organization.

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) today said it was caring for more than 10,000 refugees who had fled the Bihac pocket for a United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) in Croatia. Several thousand more refugees remained on the outer limit of the UNPA, and UNPROFOR, the local Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were assisting them. Meanwhile, a camp was being established for the refugees near the Bosnian border.

A United Nations spokesman said the problem would be a long-term one as the refugees had either worked or fought for Fikret Abdic, who had led the breakaway Muslim faction in Bihac. They were unlikely to return home until Mr. Abdic did so, which was not foreseen in the immediate future.

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Two Indian troops serving with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) remained in a critical condition today following the attack near Burlego yesterday, according to a spokesman for the Organization. Seven peace-keepers were killed and a total of nine were wounded in the incident.

UNOSOM II had not yet established who was responsible for the attack, the spokesman said. However, he noted that the three militia members taken prisoner belonged to General Mohamed Farah Aidid's sub-clan, and that the incident had taken place in territory controlled by the Somali National Alliance (SNA).

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The Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities has been attempting to streamline its agenda, amid complaints that experts do not have enough time to study documents and reports properly. However, non-governmental organizations objected to proposals that would limit their participation under the Subcommission's most hotly debated item -- human rights violations around the world. Under that item, allegations can be raised against specific countries.

Chairman Judith Sefi Attah informed the Subcommission that the current session, scheduled to conclude on Friday, was four and a half days behind schedule. The Bureau of the Subcommission had thus postponed consideration of an agenda item on human rights and scientific and technical developments until next year. Speaking times would be halved, to 10 minutes for Subcommission experts, five minutes for country observers and non-governmental organizations, and three minutes for Governments exercising their right of reply.

Amnesty International, speaking on behalf of a number of non-governmental organizations, urged the Subcommission to reject changes in the rules of participation proposed by a working group. The changes would cause "severe restrictions" on expression and thus on the victims represented by non-governmental organizations. Other experts proposed extending Subcommission sessions from four to six weeks, or setting aside the first week of each session for the item.

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